E. L. Wooster

1813

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A

# TREATISE

ON

# MAGIC,

OR, ON THE

## INTERCOURSE

BETWEEN

## SPIRITS AND MEN:

WITH

## ANNOTATIONS.

BY FREDERICK HENRY QUITMAN,

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Every plant, which my heavenly father has not planted, shall be rooted up. JESUS CHRIST.

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# PREFACE.

ALTHOUGH it is one of the chief ends of the religion of Christ, to deliver the world from the bondage of superstition, and to raise men to the glorious liberty of the children of God; still we perceive that the King of Truth, has not yet attained that general victory, over the powers of darkness, for which every true friend of the gospel, looks with anxiety.—Great numbers still continue to refuse the acceptance of that blessed privilege, and even to many professed Christians, the words of the gospel may be applied: They love darkness more than light. Stooping their necks willingly, like the Galatians of old, to the yoke of bondage, and bewitched with folly, they will not obey the voice of truth, but follow blindly the vain course marked out by their fathers, believing in absurd traditions and fables of old women. As I consider it to be the sacred duty of those, who are appointed guardians and teachers of the people, to assist them in breaking all kind of fetters, which degrade the dignity of man, it has been my incessant endeavour, in the sphere wherein Divine Providence has placed me, to deliver those that were entrusted to my care, from the shameful yoke of superstition, and to help them to the enjoyment of rational liberty. But although I flatter myself that my labours have not been altogether in vain, yet, I have often occasion to make the dejecting observation, that still some old leaven remains to be purged out, some noxious plant to be

rooted up. A recent occurrence in my neighbourhood has convinced me at once, of the difficulty of curing that fatal malady of the human kind, and of the vanity of those, who are continually boasting, of the general diffusion of rational knowledge, in our present age. In the month of October of the year 1808, the house of a respectable farmer, of that district of the town of Rhinebeck which is called Wertemberg, was believed to be haunted by evil spirits. Stones were continually thrown in it, in every direction, and part of the winter store was either destroyed or carried away. As the original course of the stones could not always be traced, while they continued to fly, even when the doors and windows were secured, the mischief was ascribed, by the inhabitants, to some supernatural cause. One particular circumstance, viz. that stones were perceived to fall in the apartments only, that were daily frequented and open to access, should have induced the people, to suspect some members of the family, and to watch their motions; but rather than to harbour this tedious suspicion, and to enter upon a careful examination, they took the shortest and easiest way, and attributed it to witchcraft. In this persuasion, they sent to a famous conjuror from the west side of the river; but the demons equally superstitious, and fearing the magical staff of the conjuror, departed before his arrival. When I was informed of these ridiculous transactions, I endeavoured to convince the people of the absurdity of their notions, requesting them at the same time, to give me notice, in case the spirits should take it again in their heads, to disturb the tranquillity of the house. About the same time of

last year, while the master of the family and his wife were gone to New-York, the demons thought proper to resume their mischievous operations. Having been informed by the son of the family, who is a married man, of his distressed situation, I went there, accompanied by a well informed elder of my church in Rhinebeck. But the rumours of my expected arrival having been spread abroad, the house was so much crowded with people, that I could not proceed in the investigation of the matter, in the manner I had wished. However, I addressed the incarnate demons, and declared to them my suspicions of their wickedness, which at least put a stop to their proceedings, whilst I was there. I am sorry that the delicacy of my situation, would not permit me to bring the offenders to confession, and to deliver them up to well deserved punishment. Others, in whose presence the spirits were less cautious, were more successful in discovering the hands by which the stones were thrown. But in spite of the solemn declarations of several credible persons, who have surprised the suspected offenders, in the act of throwing, the infatuation is so great, that many, and even members of the injured family, persist in the belief of its being practised by infernal influence. As it is said in the gospel, that the unclean spirit, when driven out, taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, so it was the case in the present instance.— Scarcely had the rumour about the forementioned witchcraft a little subsided, when we heard the report of the appearance of apparitions in several quarters of the town. And it is really to be feared, that during this dull winter, all the corners of Rhinebeck,

for want of other employment, will be infested with demons. This circumstance has induced me to compose the following treatise, chiefly for the better information of my congregations, and as a memento of the instructions, which I have often imparted to them.— The chief materials are taken, beside from the authors mentioned in the work itself, from Professor PETER EBERHARD's book on the same subject, and from Professor TIEDEMAN's inquiry into the rise and progress of magic, originally written in Latin, and rewarded with the golden medal, by the Royal Society in Gottengen. As I have not written this essay, as a specimen of my proficiency in the English language, I am indifferent about alphabet critics. Regarding the doctrines maintained in it, I am well aware, that they will not meet with general approbation. But as freedom of inquiry, is in my opinion, the birth-right of the Protestant Church, and as I am willing to allow this privilege to others, I wish, on no consideration, to be restrained in its enjoyment. For those, who are determined to adhere to pagan superstition, or who follow the maxim of the church of Rome, I believe, because it is impossible, I have not written.

THE AUTHOR.

*Rhinebeck, January 10th,* 1810.

# TREATISE ON MAGIC.

MAGIC, is the art of producing supernatural effects, by the agency of spirits. If, for that purpose, a good spirit is employed, it is called Theurgy ; if an evil spirit is put to work, it is Sorcery.

The performers of such operations are generally styled Magicians. From this definition it appears, that the interposition of supernatural beings is absolutely required to magical practices : Consequently, exhibitions that are founded on mere natural causes, however surprising they may appear, are not to be ranked among magical arts. To that class belong all tricks of sleight of hand, practised by jugglers ; all performances that require a certain apparatus, e. g. the restoration of written instruments burnt to ashes ; all exhibitions that depend upon physical or mathematical experiments, and finally all effects produced by chymical operations, for instance, the palingenesis of plants. Even astrology, when considered merely as a science of foretelling future events from the position of the stars, and grounded on a supposition that they possess a natural foreboding power, ought not to be called magic : but it comes under that name, when, by it, is understood the art of discovering secrets, of predicting future accidents, of changing metals, or of curing distempers by the influence of certain spirits ruling over the celestial bodies. The practice of auguring, so common among

the ancients, was therefore no effect of magic, because they believed some foreboding power to be inherent in the very signs which they had observed, without the concurrence of supernatural beings.

The origin of magic loses itself in the dark ages of remote antiquity, and it has always been its fate, to be believed by the ignorant, to be supported by designing ambition or avarice, and to be despised by the wise. In every age and among all nations there have been impostors, who have duped the ignorant by mysterious practices, and boasted of a familiar intercourse with, and influence over superior spirits. The Samojedes as well as the Chinese, the Laplanders as well as the civilized Europeans, have their magicians and enchanters. The cause of this general delusion is easily to be traced in the history of human understanding.

Ignorant and barbarous nations believe all nature to be animated. Every where they suppose spirits and demons, as the authors of the natural phenomena. Wherever they perceive motion, they suspect a moving soul. This general belief proceeds from a too extensive idea of analogy. We live and have sensation. The reason of our motion often proceeds from within ourselves, and the manner of our acting depends greatly upon our own determination.— Whether other things are also animated, we have first to learn from long and repeated experiments; when, therefore, man in a natural state perceives in other objects such motions, or effects produced by them, as proceed within himself from sense and reflection, he thinks that, with equal right, he must

assign to those objects, sense and a moving soul: for as it is natural to man to explain unknown things, from others wherewith he is acquainted; so the savage, as long as he is ignorant of the nature of things, will endeavor to form an idea of them, from his own sensations. Hence the visible form assigned to the soul, to spirits, and even to God himself. Hence the sensual ideas of the future state and happiness. Hence the revenge against inanimate but noxious objects, the plaintive addresses of poets and lovers to rocks, rivers and groves, and the conversation we often unknowingly hold with inanimated things. No wonder, therefore, that untutored reason considers all nature as animated. But since the effects and impressions of natural things are either pleasant or hurtful, or neither of them, the spirits who are believed to possess them, are either good or bad or of a middling class. Even the evil spirits are worshipped to prevent them from doing mischief. And as the ideas which ignorant men form of these spirits, are borrowed from their own nature, and perceiving, that mere addresses to those spirits are sometimes without success, they contrive all kind of ceremonies to render their prayers and imprecations more powerful; and if by chance their wishes are accomplished, during the performance of those ceremonies, or immediately after them, they are looked upon as infallible charms. Where this superstition has once taken possession of the human mind, there it is not difficult for self-interest and fraud to support and to encourage it. Hence, among savage nations, the many enchanters, who pretend to cure diseases by

charms, to foretell future events, to expel evil spirits, to enjoy a familiar intercourse with supernatural beings, and to possess the power to make them appear at their own pleasure. For the practice of conjuring ghosts and dead persons, we may account in the following manner.

Men are possessed of a natural instinct of prying into futurity. This inclination is the stronger, the less they are acquainted with the connexion and consequences of things, and the more they are compelled by their present wants to think of the future. Barbarous nations are endowed with a strong imagination, and are incapable of distinguishing the sports of fancy from real sensations. This is the reason, that they consider dreams and the paroxysms of fevers, as real perceptions of the senses, and that they look upon lunatics, as being divinely inspired. Thus constituted, they mistake imaginary ideas of future events, for true representations, and are induced to believe that by these means supernatural beings reveal to them the secrets of futurity. And since this state of mind, or a lively imagination, is excited by narcotic vapours, by heavy exercise of the body, by drums and by other stupifying noise, they think that in this manner the spirits are forced to appear. Self-interest or enthusiasm are soon prompted to a pretended skill in this art. Deceit moulds it into a scientific system, and in order to render it more venerable and lucrative, conceals it carefully from the eye of the vulgar and attaches to the initiation into it the most difficult and terrifying ceremonies. Thus magic receives a mysterious appearance.

The general prevalence of this practice among savage nations is, alone, a sufficient proof against the opinion of those who assert that the art of magic is of divine origin, and revealed by God himself to our first parents.

Concerning the magic of the Chaldeans, we have but few ancient and certain accounts; for the traditions respecting it, mentioned by some authors, who wrote in the fourth and fifth century of the christian era, are subject to doubt. However, from what we are able to collect, it appears, that they believed, that the gods had frequent intercourse with men; that they admitted of good and evil spirits, and finally, that they ascribed to certain herbs a power of producing magical effects. For this purpose they also employed talismans or theraphims. The Chaldeans worshipped the celestial bodies as principal deities; and as all nations had the custom to accommodate magic to their religion and theology, we may, with some degree of certainty conclude, that among the Chaldeans, the stars were chiefly employed in magical practices.

The ancient Persians were particularly renowned for their skill in magic. From them it derives its name; but this is no proof that they were the first inventors of this practice; for, as we have already mentioned, it is common to all barbarous nations. It is however highly probable that Zoroaster, the reformer of their religion, was also the first who gave to the art of magic a scientific form. The Persians did not blend so much of astrology with magic as the Chaldeans; but like these, they believed in various kinds of demons, in apparitions of deities and ghosts, in in-

spirations, prophetic extasies and portensions. They ascribed to certain forms of prayer, to certain sacrifices and drugs, an enchanting power. The adepts distinguished themselves by a peculiar and a severe diet. They abstained from wine, from animal food and from matrimonial commerce. This they did either to acquire an higher eclat of sanctity, or because they were persuaded that such a manner of living was required, to be admitted to an intercourse with superior beings, and best suited to their rapturous profession.

What Philostratus, in his biography of Apollonius, relates respecting the magical practices of the Bramins, is certainly exaggerated. From what we know of their religious opinions, it is evident that in point of magic they little differ from the above mentioned nations. Like the Chaldeans and Persians, they predict future events by inspiration, cure the sick by the influence of spirits, and make use of charms.

Moses is the most ancient writer, who makes mention of Egyptian magic. He tells us that the magicians of Egypt transformed a rod into a serpent, the water of the Nile into blood, and that they produced a mighty host of frogs. From this narration it is evident that the Egyptian enchanters pretended to transmute natural things and to produce living creatures by the power of magic. This circumstance is a proof of the great antiquity of Egyptian magic; for to such prodigies of enchantment a nation does not proceed at once. It is a resource to recover authority, when the art of curing the sick and of foretelling future events, has sunk into discredit.

The Egyptians believed in good and evil spirits, and considered the latter as the authors of all kind of diseases, against which they employed talismans and amulets.

They combined astrological calculations with the study of astronomy: The Egyptians, says Herodot, anxiously inquire, which day is sacred to particular deities? what will be the lot of a man that is born on a certain day? of what sickness he is to die? &c.— Having observed that the celestial bodies have a material influence on the seasons and atmosphere, they extended their power over the whole creation, and in particular over the vicissitudes of human life.

Some of the laws of Moses are expressedly intended to counteract this Egyptian superstition; for the Israelites were too prone to imbibe the religious notions of their masters. From them they derived witches, enchanters and necromancers. Moses forbids to inquire of the dead, and to observe times which relate to the astrological notion, that some undertakings meet with better success on particular days, and that they could learn from the stars which days promised most favorable. They assigned also a supernatural power to certain numbers and geometrical figures. Seeing that many things, after a certain number of years, months or days, came to an end, that diseases arrived to a crisis at a certain time, and that at certain periods many things were renewed, they were induced to believe that in these very numbers exists a magical power. An error, which is still prevailing in our days among the common people.

Respecting the magic of the Greeks, some mention is made in the works of Homer. His heroes visit the most reputed oracles, in order to consult the manes of their departed friends and ancestors. And even Orpheus, long before him, had consulted such an oracle of the dead, concerning his wife Euridice. According to the mythology of Homer, certain imprecations possessed the virtue to stop the blood, and what is still more astonishing, the form of men was changed into that of brutes, by the power of certain poisonous herbs and the touch of the magical wand. Circe and Medea are condemned to eternal infamy by the ancient writers, for their crimes and enchantments. And even Orpheus, Amphion, Museus and Zalmoxis, are renowned in ancient history, as powerful enchanters.

The ancient Greeks, like all other uncivilized nations, derived every disaster and disease immediately from the gods. To their immediate influence they attributed every power of superior genius. The gods, in their opinion, had not only introduced among them, different arts and sciences, but they had even condescended to be their instructors. Every noble and sublime thought was therefore considered by them as an infusion by some divine being. Thus, it is no wonder that the Grecians contrived early means, to procure the favour and assistance of their deities. During the Persian wars, the name of magic became distinguished in Greece. Pythagorus and his disciples, were great magicians, who aimed at a familiar intercourse with the gods, cured diseases by enchantment, conversed with ghosts, and ascribed to certain numbers and geometrical figures

a secret supernatural virtue. Osthanes, a Persian, made the Greeks acquainted with the whole magical system of his nation, on which he had written an extensive work. In this book he speaks repeatedly of sympathy and antipathy, chimeras, which are naturally cherished by people who are unacquainted with the true nature of things.

Democritus has by many authors been ranked among magicians, but without foundation. He was rather averse to that futile art, altho' he maintained certain secret powers in natural phenomena, the cause of which he was not yet able to perceive.— With more right is Epidocles deserving of that name, as being the first among the Greeks, who brought the spirits under two classes, dividing them in good and evil spirits. The mysteries were not only a great support to magic, but they also gave to it a new and more shining appearance. Altho' the origin of these sacred institutions is uncertain, yet they are unquestionably of a very ancient date, for Triptolomeus and Orpheus are said to have been initiated in them. Some writers have even considered the latter as the author of these secret rites, but it is more probable that they existed already before his time, and that they merely were reformed by him.— In the early ages of the Grecian nation, these religious establishments seem to have been of little renown, but afterwards they became more famous, in particular in the time of Pythagorus and his followers. It was the chief object of these institutions to enter into a familiar communication with superior beings and to perform magical operations by their assistance; for it was generally believed, that spirits and

ghosts and even the gods immediately appeared at the summons of the adept. In the higher mysteries, every initiated received his peculiar genius who attended and assisted him in all his undertakings.— However trifling and absurd the ceremonies and rules of these institutions originally might have been, with the rise of philosophy they received a more rational form. Now it became the chief duty of the initiated to lead a pure and holy life, and gradually to raise the mind above the influence of the body, or with other words, to become visionaries. This gave rise to mystic philosophy among the Greeks and to the distinction between popular and philosophic magic.— This latter kind became very famous immediately before the time of Alexander. Socrates spoke with delight of his genius, and his disciple, Plato, gave to philosophy a form altogether favorable to enthusiasm and visionary notions. In order to render the belief in genii more plausible, he asserted, that the gods were too far exalted above men, to admit of any communication between them. Hence he draws the inference, that there must be spirits of a middling kind, who convey the prayers and sacrifices of men before the gods, and *vice versa* the commands and promises of the gods to men. By their ministry, he says, all vaticinations are pronounced, all sacrifices hallowed, and all consecrations and enchantments effected. Thus Plato adhered to the popular creed, dressing it merely in a more philosophic garb. Even to certain numbers, he assigned great and supernatural virtue, and it was his opinion that a certain definite number of citizens greatly contributed to the

welfare of empires. In the reign of Alexander, another Osthanes arrived, who fascinated the Greeks still more with Persian magic, while Berosus instructed them in astrology and the use of the horoscope. The latter established a school on the Isle of Cos, and the Athenians erected a statue in his honor, which shews how greatly his magical talents were admired.

Under these circumstances, sound reason had to struggle with many and obstinate difficulties, and all Greece would have been lost in a maze of superstition, if this growing evil had not been checked by the rational efforts of their eminent philosophers.—Aristotle admitted of no other spiritual beings of inferior rank but the moving principles of the celestial bodies. All other spirits he denied, and consequently the possibility of magical operations. Epicurus disbelieved all divine concerns in human affairs, and of course every thing relating to magic.

During the reign of Ptolomy Philadelphus, the art of magic arrived to the highest pitch. The situation of Alexandria, so favorable to commerce, and the desolations of a destructive war, had invited a great number of people, from all nations and religions, to settle in that city, where they amalgamated their superstitious notions in one stupendous mass: at the same time the caballa originated in Egypt, or it was rather reduced into a more scientific form.

The Jews, forever fond of signs and wonders, and encouraged by the example of their prophets, who maintained a familiar intercourse with the Supreme Being, grasped with eagerness after every suitable

ingredient for the aggrandizement of their magical system. From their own magical forms and ceremonies, from the magic of Egypt and Greece, and from the philosophy of Pythagorus and Plato, they formed a monstrous system, exceeding that of all other nations, and including all the chimeras of astrology, the dreams of the Pythagoreans and Platonics, and the enchanting forms and ceremonies which were in vogue among the common people. Thus the practice of magic became gradually more general. But it was not this popular kind alone that extended itself. The study of its higher branch, or of mystic and philosophical magic, was pursued with the same ardour. It was the sole object of the former to procure the assistance of superior beings, for certain purposes, while it was the aim of the latter to rise by degrees to the sight of God and superior spirits, and to the intrinsic knowledge of natural things; on which account Plato met with general applause.

This kind of mystic theology was, and is still nowhere to be found in an higher degree, than in Indostan. In a country where the imagination of the inhabitants is exceeding powerful, where the wants of nature are easily supplied, and where an oppressive heat inclines the body to rest and ease, there the soul is gradually abstracted from the senses and absorbed in itself. There the mind takes delight in undisturbed rest, sinks into quietism, and considers the contemplation of naught, and corporeal and mental inactivity, as its highest good. In this situation, prolific fancy is incessantly employed to create strong illusions, which are mistaken by the passive mind

for real facts. In this ecstatic state, the soul fancies to be elevated to the presence of God and the company of supernatural beings. This mystical philosophy, known by the name of theosophy, when introduced into the Jewish and Christian religious systems, became a source of many absurd and fatal notions.

From the ancient history of the Romans, it appears, that they practised magic from the very beginning of their existence as a nation. Numa Pompilius consulted the oracles of the gods, and one of the laws of the twelve tables forbids conjuring the fruits of the field, and another prohibits the singing of enchanting hymns. The Romans probably derived this magical practice from the Sabines and Etruscans, in particular from the latter, who were a very superstitious people, of which they gave an evident proof, by writing the words *arse verse*, on the doors of their houses, to avert the danger of fire.

As it was the custom of the Romans to adopt the gods of the conquered nations, so it was natural to them to imitate their magical practices; for magic is every where founded on the national religion from which it originated. Ennius inveighs against astrologers and Egyptian fortune-tellers, but notwithstanding his remonstrances, the Romans adhered to their superstition, and no sooner were they freed by his death, from his reproachful remarks, than they introduced the Thessalian enchanters. For this reason it was thought necessary to enact laws against this practice, among which the law of Sulla, *de vene-*

*ficis et Sicariis*, is particularly notorious. However this did not stop the progress of this infatuation, for it had found a sanctuary in the palaces of the rich and the nobles, so that magic met with more friends in Rome than even in Greece. The religion of the Romans was more inclined to superstition, the secret books of their priests containing various methods and rules for compelling the gods to make their appearance, and in their ancient history are related many miracles performed by their priests and augurs. The Romans were also more tenacious, than the Greeks, of the religious ceremonies of their ancestors; and finally, philosophy found not so ready access in Rome, as in Greece, and was fostered only by a few individuals.

Some of the first emperors published severe laws against magic, but others again encouraged this practice by their own example. Thus it was impossible to put a stop to this popular frenzy, and even the punishments which were sometimes publicly inflicted on professed offenders, seem rather to have had a tendency to spread it more at large. Pliny, in his natural history, complains often of the common folly of his age, and takes particular notice of many magical practices prevailing in his time.

Simon Magus and Apollonius of Tyana, are branded in christian church history as notorious magicians. However the latter did not belong to the common class; despising the appearance of mercenary views, he applied to the study of mystical magic.— The Basilidians, Carpocratians, the Gnostics and

Ophites, cherished magical notions. And even the fathers of the primitive christian church, did not deny the power of magic, although they opposed it, as an infernal practice.

The New-Platonics promoted the study of magic in an astonishing manner, from the beginning of the third century to the time of Constantine the great. At that time they began to reduce mystical magic into a regular system, in which they were assisted by christian doctors. So much were they taken with their whim, that they forged some books under the name of ancient Sages, e. g. Oracula Caldaica, Clavicula Salomonis, &c.

Plotin pretended to be an adept in magic. At a time when a necklace was stolen from a lady, he pointed out the thief from among the present domestic servants, who immediately confessed his guilt.— He had a genius with whom he conversed in a familiar style, and pretended to have demons at his command. Four times, says his biographer Porphyrius, he was admitted to the immediate presence and vision of God. This is at present the last and highest aim of magic. In the beginning, when men believed in many divinities and demons, without rank or subordination, the conjurer contented himself with the assistance and favor of any of these deities or spirits, but after they were classed in different ranks, he courted the friendship of the most powerful, and finally, when the inferior spirits were subordinated to one Supreme Being, it became the last and absolute end of magic, to enter into a close communion with

God himself, in order to operate wonders by his immediate influence.

The followers of Plotin brought the system of their master still to higher perfection. Porphyr, in order to make the distinction between popular and mystical magic more apparent, maintained that some magical operations were performed by the assistance of good spirits, but others by the aid of evil spirits. To the former he gave the honorable name of Theurgy, but the latter he called Geoty. From both sorts he distinguished Theosophy, by which he understood the highest felicity and purest knowledge of things, produced by an immediate tuition of God, to which man arrived only by purity of heart and an entire abstraction of the mind from all other ideas.

Constantine and Constans published severe laws against geoty, condemning all to the stake who were found guilty of this crime; but they indulged theurgy. Herein they were followed by the council.—However, this precaution had not the designed effect of exterminating this detestable superstition. It received new vigor during the reign of Julian the apostate, who was infected with this delirium in the school of the New-Platonics. This prince was so great an admirer of that art, that he wandered from place to place in search of old temples, where, with fear and trembling, he witnessed the awful scene of compelling gods and ghosts to make their appearance. Iamblious, a disciple of Porphyr, concerning whom many strange stories are told by his followers, was also a zealous defender of this science. There exists a book under his name, treating of the Egyp-

tian mysteries, which gives the most correct account of the doctrine of the New-Platonic school, respecting magic and theurgy. After his time, theurgy and theosophy, or a familiar intercourse with God himself, and consequently, the art of foretelling future events and of performing wonders, was considered as the chief design of all Platonic philosophy. Philosophy being thus corrupted by magic, the contagion easily spread to other sciences.

The art of physic, in particular, became contaminated with this fatal poison. Although Galen had employed all reasonable means to free his noble profession from magical practices, still his endeavours were of little avail against the obstinacy of ignorance, and the pliancy of credulity. Marcellus, Empiricus, Actius, Alexander, and a numerous host of quacks, prescribed the most absurd cures, and overpowered by their gasconades the voice of sound reason, which dictated a method of healing, founded on maxims derived from the nature, as well of the diseases as of the medicines to be employed for their cure.— Nothing was more common in those times than to kill men, with a view to practice magical operations with their intestines. It was then, that they began to speak of covenants with the devil, and of nocturnal assemblies of witches at certain appointed places. However the Jewish tradition of carnal commerce between spirits or angels, and females of the human species, is of an earlier date. The same age gave rise to what is properly called, mystical theology, and which is distinguished merely in name from theurgy. The fact is this : There were many who, tho' they professed christianity, were still zealous adher-

ents of the philosophy of Plato, and who, from a predeliction for their old system, endeavoured to model the doctrines of the christian religion, in a form corresponding with the principles of Plato. Such weak and enthusiastic persons, were often induced by fear, in troublesome times, to resort to desert places.—Here they aimed at a particular degree of holiness, and waited for the accomplishment of the promises which, in sacred writ, are given to those who do not conform to the world, but sequestrate themselves from it. They believed to obtain this sanctity by fasting, mortifications and a rigorous discipline.—Thus with a corrupted imagination, they contrived a method, to draw nigh to God, to be admitted to his intuitive presence and the communion of angels.

It was the opinion of the theurgists, that by certain forms of prayer, ceremonies, sacrifices and a holy life, they could compel the Supreme Being, as well as the demons, to illuminate them with superior light, while christian mystics, more modestly left it to divine option, to whom he would condescend and gratify with his vision. Thus, both agreed, that a certain method is to be observed to arrive to the communion with God and angels, and the precepts prescribed for that purpose by both parties, are almost of the same stamp. They require abstinence, fasting, a severe diet, solitude, prayers, vigils and divine contemplation. Finally, the aim of both is the same, namely, to be transported to a vision of God's majestic glory, and of angels in their shining robes.

Dionysius Areopagita, in the fifth century of the christian era, brought this kind of mystic into a regular system.

The noted conformity in the maxims and rules of magicians, theurgists and mystics arises from the same natural cause. They all agree that no spirits can be seen by means of the external senses, or at least that in such a case, the communication between the natural and spiritual world cannot be lasting. To arrive to a continual intercourse with superior spirits, is, in their opinion, a different way prescribed, deviating from the common course of life. Something must be unhinged in the organic system, which only can be effected by an uncommon manner of living.— They have therefore recourse either to powerful narcotic medicines, or to a rigorous diet and a peculiar dress.

Those who make use of the former means, fancy, during their intoxication, fury or stupor, to see wonderful things, and to be transported to the society of the spirits ; but they, who follow the latter method, corrupt forever the faculty of imagination, by an extravagant diet. The debilitated body and enervated senses become a receptacle of all kinds of strange forms and ideas, and at last the infatuated mortal believes really to perceive, what he wishes to see.— From this it plainly appears, what is the reason, that by all kind of magic that ever has prevailed among mankind, either of these means have been employed ; the former chiefly among barbarous nations, but the latter among men in a more civilized state. This is also the reason, why all barbarous nations, and even the Greeks and Romans, attributed the art of vaticination to a kind of fury, and that in ancient magic, drugs and herbs were made use of, as means to summon the gods, to change the form of men, and to

make them fly through the air. This is finally the cause, why in later times, fasting, a monastic life, abstinence and vigils are recommended as the proper method of obtaining supernatural visions.

From the general tendency of human nature to superstitious notions, we are inclined to suppose, that the inhabitants of western Europe, have been acquainted with the practice of magic, long before they had any communication with the Romans. This conjecture is confirmed by the testimony of the most celebrated historians of that age. Pliny asserts that the ancient Britons were much addicted to magic, and Strabo, as well as Tacitus, give us some account of the enchantments prevailing among the Germans.— It is also certified by the same authority, that the Druids of the Gauls ascribed to some herbs a supernatural power which, in their opinion, was increased by the influence of the moon. From the time of the forementioned authors to the eighth century, we find little on record, concerning the state of magic among those nations. This silence in history, may be attributed, either to the prevailing ignorance of those ages, or to the presumption of the monks, the only writers of those times, who either supposed excommunication a sufficient barrier against that superstition, or who thought it improper to defile themselves with that infernal wickedness. However we find again some traces of this practice in the fourth century, when the Franks, the Westrogoths and Ostrogoths published laws against it. In the sixth century two women accused of witchcraft were publicly burnt. The Saracens, who conquered Spain in the eighth century, introduced the art of magic, with

other sciences in that country. They had borrowed their philosophy from the Greeks, and although they proposed Aristotle to be their master; still they explained his system, according to New-Platonic principles. In this manner Spain became acquainted with a mixture of theosophical philosophy and popular magic, in which they were chiefly supported by the authority of Avicenna. And even at Salamanca and Toledo, were public lessons given in the art of magic, in caverns appropriated for that purpose.

Humanity shudders at the horrid scenes, exhibited during the reign of Charlemagne, when a great number of pretended witches were condemned to the pile by superstitious fury. Since the introduction of Arabic literature all western Europe seemed to be enchanted. Britons, Franks and Germans read with avidity Arabic authors and imbibed from them, the chimerical notions of theurgic or mystical and popular magic. Even learned divines applied to the study of the former with great eagerness, after the works of Dionysius Areopagita had been translated into the Latin language, by John Scotus Engena. This branch of magic obtained particular high authority in the thirteenth century. It was in the same age that first mention is made of certain contracts, entered into with the prince of darkness, and signed with human blood, by which one party bound himself to renounce the christian religion, under condition to procure from the other party infernal assistance. At the same time, an he goat was placed in the chair instead of an old woman, to preside in the assembly of witches. Amulets, philacteria and enchanting ceremonies

received another form. In the place of the rites borrowed from pagan superstition, others were substituted, more corresponding with the christian religion. Since that time, magic branched out in three different branches. The first was founded on a contract with Satan. The second on astrological notions, on sympathy and antipathy, and on the power of some words and ceremonies derived from them, and finally, the third on a certain purification of the soul, by which they believed to be rendered capable of seeing and summoning good spirits and even God himself. Innocent instituted a secret inquisition against heretics with a view to keep the church clear from all error and schismatics. The inquisitors of that time did not yet take notice of witches, leaving their punishment to the magistrates; but about the middle of the fourteenth century, they placed witchcraft in the catalogue of heresies and began to burn witches, but the more they were persecuted, the more they increased, so that magic became a common subject of discussion and was so often defended in public writings and disputes, that the academy of Paris, was induced to put a stop to it by prohibiting all books written on that subject.

At the end of the fifteenth century appeared the fatal book, called, Nalleus Maleficorum—in which the inquisitors endeavour to prove from many instances, the existence of infernal magic, mentioning at the same time, the manner in which they intended to proceed against this wickedness. But in the beginning of the sixteenth century there arose two learned men, John Wierus and Regenaldus Scotus, who de-

fended with courage, the unhappy women that were accused of witchcraft, and showed the impropriety of the proceedings of the inquisitors, though they did not entirely deny the power of magic. It was not before the reform of philosophy that the absurdity of magic was exposed. However the light of reason advanced but slowly, and Wierus and Scotus were silenced by the ignorant multitude. The Cautio Criminalis of Frederic Spe was more successful, for it effected that in many places the procedures against witches were discarded. England is greatly indebted to Webster for his opposition to this superstition, wherein he was soon supported by the noble and learned efforts of John Hutchinson. In Holland it was attacked in a valiant manner by the keen reasonings of Balthasar Beckker in his Enchanted World, for which temerity he had to resign his place as minister in Amsterdam. But it received the severest blow from the pen of Christian Thomasius, a native of Leipsic, who, to save himself from the intrigues of bigotry was obliged to leave his country. However he found an asylum in the neighbouring dominions of the elector of Brandenburgh and became one of the first founders of the celebrated university at Halle, where he was invested with the professorship of philosophy and jurisprudence.

The fate of these two patriotic philosophers shows at once, the dangers attached to such an enterprise and the difficulty in destroying that three-headed monster.

D. Bekker mentions many cases of pretended witchcraft happening in his time, not only in popish but even in protestant countries. Among the latter, the

instance of an old woman in the west of England, deserves particular notice, as being certified by the rector of the parish, a non-conformist minister, two church officers and two constables. Even the dramatic muse of Shakespeare, so fond of witches and apparitions of ghosts, bears witness of the spirit that prevailed in his time, although she proves nothing against the sound principles of the bard. The same spirit seems to have accompanied the emigrants from Europe to this western country. The fatal infatuation, which about that time raged with unrelenting fury in some parts of New-England, is known to every reader of American history.

The seventeenth century seems to have been exceedingly favourable to magical pursuits, and in particular to its higher branches, theurgy and theosophy. It was in the beginning of this age that the famous Rosicrucian order was established, consisting chiefly of members of the medical profession, who are said to have been skilled in alchymy and in possession of the philosopher's stone. About the same time the Aurora of Jacob Bochme was published. So well was this jargon received by the public, that it was soon translated in most all modern languages and followed by a number of similar effusions from that enthusiastic fountain. From the mystical works of that man, it is presumed, that George Fox and Robert Barclay, have drawn the leading principles of their new sect. The same visionary shades were pursued by John Labadie, Anna Maria Schurman, Antoinette Bourignon and others, who disturbed France, Flanders, the Netherlands and Germany with their turbulent notions.

The eighteenth century is by some styled the age of reason. And indeed, the light prepared by the illustrious genius of Locke, Sir Isaac Newton, Leibnitz and Wolff burst forth, at the dawn of this age, with uncommon splendor. But modern history and our own experience afford us sufficient proof, that all the efforts of those champions for sound reasoning, supported by the labours of Euler, Semler, Kant, and others, have not been so successful, as could be expected, in dispelling the superstitious gloom, which hung, and is still hovering over the human mind. Emanuel Swedenborg, a Swedish nobleman, believing to have enjoyed a personal appearance of the Lord, became in the beginning of this age, the founder of a sect of visionaries, which has branched out to this side of the Atlantic. The notions of John Labadie, are said to have still strenuous advocates in Holland, England, Scotland and America. That this is fact, with respect to the last mentioned country is liable to little doubt; for as liberty of conscience proves the excellency of our constitution, so it has eventually shown, to what extravagancies human reason may proceed, in the instance of Jemima Wilkenson and a number of enthusiasts, whose wild flights we daily witness.

The theurgists of the eighteenth century often condescended to the practice of magic of the popular kind. Cagleostro was at the same time an alchymist and necromancer, and Schroepher and Pater Gassner were of the same stamp. The last mentioned Ex-Jesuit had even the address to impose upon the learned and pious author of the famous essay on

physiognomy, and Lavater undertook to defend Gassner and his miracles in a work written for that purpose under the title of An Essay on Miraculous Faith.

As the present century is deemed to surpass all former ages in philosophical knowledge, so the inhabitants of the United States of America are often styled in public print, the most enlightened nation on earth. Although the latter assertion may be granted, with regard to the knowledge of their political rights and of matters relating to them, still in many other respects experience forbids us to give it our general assent. What must we think, when we see, that many thousands suffer themselves to be led away and bewildered by visionary and extravagant notions, contrary to the dictates of sound reason and revealed truth? What must we say to the accounts industriously circulated of transports, visions and apparitions of good and evil spirits? What must we feel, when we are informed that in other accounts respectable people, resort to the closet of a fortune-teller to have a secret discovered or their fortune told? What must we say, to the miraculous cures performed by wonder-doctors, to the fees paid to conjurers and to the charms employed in the most fatal distempers of man and beast? Even magic of the coarsest kind has not entirely discontinued among us. The power of Satan and of demons is generally believed to be as efficacious as in time of old, and witches are suspected in many cases and places.—Even while I am writing this, we are amused with a tale of witchcraft in our neighbourhood, against which

all contradiction is in vain. The people will have it that stones are thrown in the enchanted house by an invisible hand, and that the wanting sausages are pilfered by marauding fiends. Well may we say with the ancients: The history of man, is the history of human follies.

From the preceding account, it appears as clear as the light of day, that all belief in communications between spirits and men, and in supernatural operations performed by spiritual assistance; all stories of visions, of apparitions of ghosts and witchcraft, all pretensions to a prescience of future accidents, and to a knowledge of real secrets; all accounts of successful experiments in alchymy; of enchantments and conjurations, and of cures effected by charms or sympathy are founded in ignorance, and supported by deceit. Notwithstanding this evident fact, these superstitious notions have found friends and advocates in every age and among all nations, not only among the vulgar, but also among the higher ranks of society, and even among the learned by profession. And as with the regard to the latter class, we may reasonably suppose, that their opinions should be founded on more plausible grounds, than on mere tradition; we will examine into the validity of their arguments, in favor of supernatural magic or witchcraft, stating at the same time what may be reasonably advanced against them. The controversy on this subject, may be reduced under the following three questions:—

1. Is it possible that supernatural beings can affect men, or enable them to perform supernatural operations? And allowing this to be practicable,

2. Is there any probability of such an intercourse between the spiritual and natural world ?
3. Are there any undeniable proofs of the real existence of witchcraft, and other magical practices ?

Although it is common in philosophy to begin all researches with an inquiry in the possibility of the subject under discussion ; still in the case before us we forego this question, as unessential and of no importance. For all disputes on the absolute possibility of magic, the proofs on both sides are of equal weight. And to ascertain its relative possibility, our knowledge of the spiritual and corporeal world, of the dark windings of pneumatology and the natural elements is not adequate. Besides, this question is altogether immaterial to our purpose. We may admit the possibility of any thing, which is neither probable nor real. All the figures and data of geometers are possible magnitudes ; but we all know, that they never can really exist. We may grant, therefore, the possibility of witchcraft, and still maintain, that witches never have existed. This maxim we follow in common life, for we act not upon possibilities ; but upon probability and fact. According to the principles of some metaphysics, the soul of the famous Emanuel Swedenborg could be in Sirius, while his body was walking in the streets of Stockholm ; but it is not at all likely that this visionary should have wandered through the heavenly spheres. From the writings of this man, and in particular from the book that bears the title, De Conjugio Cœli, it is plain that all his visions, were sports of his deranged fancy. And still we find that the proofs, which are commonly used in support of witchcraft, chiefly depend

on its possibility. The advocates for witchcraft reason nearly in the following curious manner: It is possible, that there exist spirits of a superior nature, than that of the human soul; among these spirits there may be some of an evil disposition, who perhaps are capable of acting upon matter. It may be that these spirits surpass man on natural knowledge, and possess the power of forming the image of a dead man from air, and to make it appear at the command of the magician. Who knows whether it is not in their power to produce distempers among men and brutes, and even thunder, lightning and hailstorms? Could not an evil spirit of high rank be able to form a wax figure, and to provide it with the sympathetic quality, by which the blows that are given to it, are felt by the man whom it is designed to represent? But it is too tedious to repeat all the *may bes* and *perhapses*, wherewith the brain of credulity is stored. On the same principles we may prove, that there are Euclids, Lockes and Newtons, among the Hottentots, Eskemaux and Newzealanders, or that the mermaids who are supposed to be good singers, form a concert at the bottom of the ocean. But superstition does not stop even here. The annals of magic give us many serious accounts of wonderful operations, diametrically opposed to the dictates of sound reason, and the established laws of nature. Here we are informed that the devil is possessed of the power of changing a man into a wolf, without changing their respective nature, although the wounds inflicted on the animal are perceived on the same part of the human body; which is as impossible, as that a triangle

should be at the same a circle. Here we are told that magicians have penetrated through closed doors, that they have made themselves invisible, and other fine stories of the same caliber. The cause of all this nonsense is no other than ignorance and a total want of knowledge of natural philosophy.

We proceed to the second question: Is there any reason to suppose that supernatural operations can be produced by the agency of spirits? This question resolves itself again into three others.

1. Is it probable that spirits, who are not endowed with an organic body, can immediately act upon matter; and, e. g. form a human body from air or produce a storm?
2. Is it probable that such spirits can immediately affect the soul, and produce in it such perceptions, as otherwise are produced in it by the instrumentality of the senses only?
3. Is it credible that pretended powerful spirits, e. g. a Beelzebub or an Adsamelech, or any inferior demon, should be ready at the command of an old woman or a mean fellow, or that they should be compelled by some insignificant words or ceremonies, to certain desired operations?

Whatever idea may be formed of magic or witchcraft, it always presupposes, either that spirits act upon matter, and really produce, when commanded by the magician, the changes which are perceived, or that they immediately affect the soul and create in it such sensations, as are mistaken for real perceptions of the senses.

As to the first question, we utterly deny, that there exists any probability that spirits without an organic

body, should be able to act upon matter, for 1st, God in his infinite wisdom and goodness, and for the benefit of his living creatures, has subjected all changes in the universe to certain established and invariable laws. By these laws the seasons are ruled, and all changes in the atmosphere and phenomena in the natural world are regulated, on which the support of animal life and the vegetation of plants depends. If, therefore, evil spirits had the power of acting immediately upon matter, they would be able to prevent the laws of nature, to change the seasons and the atmosphere at their own pleasure, and to raise disorder and confusion in the visible world, and thus to counteract all good and benevolent designs of the creator. Who will undertake to reconcile such ideas with the wisdom and goodness of the Supreme Being? Let it not be said, that although evil spirits have the power to disturb the natural order of things, yet they are prevented from doing it by the superior power of God; for there is not the least probability that God should have allowed them to change his own established laws and to oppose his good and benevolent intentions. And suppose that God had granted them such a power, would he in that case not be obliged to arrest it, by a continued series of miracles? for, if it is a miracle, when God, by his immediate interposition, hinders the natural powers in their operations, then it is still a greater miracle, immediately to restrain the efforts of spiritual powers. And is there the least ground to suppose, that the Governor of the Universe should have placed himself under the degrading ne-

cessity to perform continual miracles, in order to preserve order and to accomplish his ends in the world ? 2d. If spirits could act upon matter, we should see many strange phenomena in the natural world, deviating from the known and established laws of nature. But this is not the case. The seasons and changes in the atmosphere, storms, rain, hail, snow and wind, proceed from natural causes, and continue to obey the laws that are prescribed to them ; consequently, it is not probable that spirits are possessed of the power to interfere in the course of the natural world. 3d. In astronomy, we perceive no alterations in the established laws and fixed motions of the stars. If the devil had it in his power to change an old woman into a wolf, he might with the same ease, transform our earth, which is a spheroid, into a cube ; but this has never entered his head. 4th. If spirits could act immediately upon matter, we should have unquestionable and certain proofs of their power. If Satan is capable of raising the ghost of a dead man, it would be an easy matter for him to stop the ball of a cannon in its course ; but place an enchanter before the mouth of a cannon, and allow him to conjure all the demons to protect him against its force, I am convinced that he will humbly confess, that his art does not extend so far. It is true there are some braggarts, who would fain make us believe, that they are able to parry a ball from a gun with their sword. They also suffer themselves to be fired at ; but in this trick Satan has no concern, for it is practised in a very natural manner.

Secondly, is it probable that spirits can affect our soul, and produce in it designed sensations? It was the fashion in former ages, to explain witchcraft, from an immediate operation of spirits on matter. It was then believed that the devil, at the humble request of an old woman, changed her into a wolf, and that he actually carried the witches on an he goat or a broomstick, through the air. At the conjuration of a ghost, he formed really a body from air, similar to the deceased, or brought the corpse from the grave and bestowed on it temporary animation. This was the easiest way of philosophizing, as it required no serious efforts of the mind. The modern friends and patrons of witchcraft, scorning that spindle philosophy, endeavor to explain it in a more subtile way. For this purpose they maintain a kind of illusion, in the process of which, however, they do not agree. Some assert, that the devil acts upon our organs so as to raise in the soul, sensations of optional objects. It is known, they say, that the rays of light represent the image of the visible objects on the retina, which images are perceived by the soul. When, therefore, the devil designs to change an old woman into a wolf, he does not take the trouble to give to the hag a new shape, but he only forms on the membrane of the spectator's eye the image of a wolf, instead of that of the witch. But does this illusion not presuppose an action of the evil spirit on matter? Are our organs no parts of our bodies? and is not the devil obliged to act upon the retina, when he wishes to form an image at the bottom of the eye? And is not the membraneous part of the eye a body? Thus we see

that the pretended philosophical explanation, is subject to the same difficulties, as the forementioned spindle philosophy. Superstition believes, that Satan acts immediately on the witch, whom he intends to transform into a wolf; but the philosopher maintains that the evil spirit merely affects the organs of the spectators, in order to produce the designed delusion. The opinion of both is plainly founded on the hypothesis that evil spirits have the power to act upon matter, which, as already demonstrated, is very unlikely.

Other philosophers, convinced of the absurdity of this supposition, have attempted to elucidate this illusion by an immediate action of the spirits on the human soul. All sensations are conceptions produced in the soul by the organs or rather by the common sensorium. If it therefore were in the power of a demon, designing to change a man into a wolf or to raise a ghost, immediately to produce in the soul such ideas, as commonly arise from perceptions of sense, then we would readily admit that there exist some plausible grounds for the belief in magic and witchcraft; but it is not verisimilar that spirits are possessed of this power, or that demons can act upon the human soul, so as to produce in it, ideas and sensations of external objects. This will plainly appear from the following demonstrations.

1. It has pleased the wise Creator, in order to excite sensations in the soul both of animals and men, to provide them with proper organs, planned after the nicest rules of geometry. If it had been possible in the construction of the natural world, to re-

ceive sensation by the immediate and mutual action of spirits upon one another, to what use were then the artificial structure of the eye, the ear, and the other organs? Besides

2. The actions of men and animals require a certainty of sense (certitudo sensuum.) When I see an apple, and its touch, taste and smell correspond with this perception, then I conclude with certainty that it is an apple, and nothing else. This certainty of sensation would certainly be lost, if it were possible that spirits could produce illusive perceptions, immediately in the soul. A fiend could make us believe that we were eating sugar, while we were actually swallowing poison. Suppose a robber, sword in hand, attacks a traveller, with an intention to murder him, but he is prevented from the perpetration of that horrid crime, and taken prisoner. Suppose the thief, when arrainged in a court of justice, pleads not guilty, giving for reason that both the traveller and witnesses have been deluded by the devil: will any judge in our present age admit of such an excuse? Will he not rather reject it as deserving no credit?

3. If it is true, as we have already demonstrated, that spirits cannot act upon matter, then we have the same reasons to believe that it is not in their power to affect the soul immediately. Bodies consist of simple elements. If therefore spirits cannot act upon bodies, it follows, that they cannot act upon elements. Our souls are likewise mundane elements, although their internal design raises them above the corporeal elements. If therefore spirits

are not able to act upon the elements of the body, then it is not likely that they can affect the interior of the soul.

4. It is known that the forms of the ideas produced in the soul by exterior objects, depend upon the organism of the eye and the other senses. If therefore the devil could produce sensations immediately in the soul, then it would be possible to the blind, when assisted by the devil, to see, and to the deaf to hear; but this has never been the case: and therefore it is not at all probable that strange spirits should have such a power over our soul.

These arguments against the immediate influence of spirits on the human frame, have appeared so powerful to some friends of magic and witchcraft, that they were obliged to have recourse to another expedient not less philosophical than the former. In order to enable the spirits to act upon our organs, and to appear to their devotees under any optical form, they provided them with subtile aerial bodies. Doctor Pordage asserts in his divine metaphysics that all spirits have bodies, that the bodies of angels are composed of light, but the bodies of devils of black ether. Like men, they have heads, hands, feet, and five senses. The stomach is placed in the breast, but they have no intestines. The bodies are not composed of earth, air, water or fire, but they are the quintessence of the four elements; they are not heavy, and although they are penetrable, they are not subject to solubility. The demons can give to their body what form they please. They can raise themselves into giants or reduce themselves to dwarfs. So that, ac-

cording to the opinion of this philosopher, the devil acts properly on his own body and in this way on our organs. However, this doctrine is liable to the two following chief objections.

1. He that advances a position that contradicts evident physical and mathematical principles, proposes a false doctrine. He that would maintain, that a circle can have three angles, contradicts himself and is insane. Now it is a fundamental principle of natural philosophy, that impenetrability and separability are essential qualities of a body; he therefore who asserts that the devil has a body, which is penetrable and at the same time indissoluble, maintains that this body is no body, or, which amounts to the same, that the devil has no body at all.

2. If you attempt to prove that the devil has a body, you must do it either by demonstration (a priori) or from experience (aposteriori.) It would be in vain to demonstrate a priori, that the devil is provided with a body; for all our knowledge of what really exists, must be derived from experience.— It is true some metaphysics have seriously endeavoured to prove, that all spirits must be united to a body; but it is also known to what difficulties and objections their reasonings are subject. Thus the only proof that remains for this opinion must be drawn from experience. But here we are quite at a loss, unless we give full credit to all the stories related in the assemblies of the spinning room. Pordage, indeed, tells us that Satan had honoured him with a procession of his whole host, through

his study room. He even gives us a detailed description of this demonical review. They entered, says he, through the windows, without breaking a single glass, and went out again through the wall. Some were on foot, but others in carriages. But he confesses, that he perceived all this by his interior senses only, whilst even with closed eyes, he could plainly see these legions of devils. He declares that he could make such experiments only, when the sense of the dark principle was open to him ; for man, according to his opinion, has three different kind of senses. The sense of the principle of the terrestrial world, by which he sees the bodies and the senses of the world of light and the world of darkness. By the former he sees the angels, and by the latter the devils. But his relations resemble so much the dreams of heated imagination, that we cannot give more credit to them, than to the visions of Swedenborg.

The third question remains yet to be answered, namely: Is it probable that powerful spirits should readily obey the summons of a conjurer and execute the commands imposed on them. Superstitious people have a very strange idea of the devil. They think that the powerful prince of darkness, is able to produce lightning, thunder, storms and earthquakes ; that it is in his power to lift up and carry men thro' the air, and to change a rod into a serpent; and yet they believe that this powerful spirit is deterred by a circle from hurting the conjurer, whom it circumscribes. They suppose that the power of Satan can be arrested, by unmeaning words, magic characters,

fish-bone and other trifling things. Thus the devil is represented, on one hand as a very powerful and crafty being, and on the other hand, as a weak, miserable and stupid fool. When we take notice of the persons, who commonly pretend to conjure evil spirits, and reflect on the means which they generally employ to that purpose; we shall easily be convinced that all their pretended authority over the spirits, is nothing but a daring imposition. Who are the persons that commonly pretend to conjure and to command the devil? Laplanders, who have scarcely as much sense as the raindeer that draws their sled; toothless old women, that rather vegitate than breathe; gypsies, strollers, jugglers, quacks and ragamuffins. These are the noble cavaliers, that enter the lists with Satan, and fancy themselves to be able to compel him, by an enchanted drum, or by hocus pocus, to reveal future events, to change the wind at their pleasure, to raise them in the air, to produce distempers, plague and earthquakes, to assist them in the cure of convulsions, cramps and other diseases; although they cannot force him to furnish them with means to satisfy their hunger and to cover their nakedness. And what are the means that are employed, to frighten the devil into obedience? A circle marked with chalk, a human skull, forms written in corrupt hebrew or other foreign languages, and other instruments which are not qualified to manage even a dog or cat. Is there the least probability that the devil, who is supposed to be such a powerful being, should suffer himself to be terrified, by such despicable persons and trifling means, which are more calculated

to excite his laughter than his fear? If that powerful spirit is capable of raising the dead from the grave, and of changing the shape of men, why then does he not show his skill unless compelled to it, by those miserable manœuvers?

Thus far we have shown, that the practice of magic is highly improbable, or that there is not the least ground to suppose, that supernatural operations, should be performed by the agency of spirits. But all the preceding demonstrations would avail us nothing, if the existence of witchcraft could be proven by unquestionable facts. A single instance of the kind, sufficiently ascertained, would overthrow all our former theory. But I defy all patrons of witchcraft, to produce a single fact, wherein spirits have been concerned. If all stories of witchcraft were duly examined and impartially investigated, it would be found that the wonderful operations, which superstition attributes to the influence of spirits, either proceed from natural causes, or that they are a mere cheat of designing impostors, or finally that the very stories are forged for the amusement of the credulous. To prove this to be fact, I shall first make some preparatory remarks to the history of conjurers, and then pass the chief magicians and enchanters in proper review.

First, it appears from the history of mankind, that the more ignorant people are, and the darker the age in which they live, the more they are inclined to believe in witchcraft, and to deal in fables and marvellous stories of enchantments and visions. At the time of Montezuma, all America was filled with conjurers. Among the Laplanders, Malays, Hottentots

and the common people in China, witchcraft is a common traffic. This was the very case in Europe before the time of the reformation. Even in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, witches were burnt in great numbers. But as soon as the rays of philosophy began to spread light, the dark gloom of superstition disappeared, and all procedures against witchcraft were dismissed in the enlightened parts of Europe. At present, it is scarcely any where publicly countenanced, unless among the lowest class of the people, and in some Popish countries. In England, France, and the greater part of Germany, and even in Italy, it has entirely ceased. Is this not a plain proof of the folly of witchcraft? With the progress of knowledge and rational inquiry, truth appears gradually in a more glowing light. The doctrine of the circulation of the blood, of the gravity of the air and the electricity of the clouds, is established beyond the reach of doubt, in spite of all contradiction, and by no other force, than by the power of rational experiment. Why then should the present philosophers not have been able to penetrate to the bottom of witchcraft if it had any ground? but on the contrary, after due examination, they have found it to be a castle built in the air without foundation, and which must gradually disappear, with the progress of the light of reason. Besides many zealous advocates for witchcraft, like Henry Cornelius Agrippa, have at last been convinced of the vanity of this practice, and have denounced it to the world.

Secondly, the method in which conjurers generally proceed, bespeaks many traces of deceit. Night,

the fertile parent of dreams and visions, is commonly the time appointed for their magical exhibitions. The ghosts appear by the light of candles or lamps, in order to conceal with more ease the springs of the engines under the shade, which thereby is naturally occasioned. The scene of action is designedly prepared to terrify the spectators. The walls are lined with black, human skulls and bones are displayed on the table, and all that are present, are forbidden, under forfeiture of life, to utter a single word. There arises a horrible noise; the spectator is more dead than alive, and his strained imagination is prepared to receive every impression, which the conjurer wishes to imprint. Some have even the address, in order to derange the spectators still more, to make them drink some spirituous liquor, in imitation of the Egyptian magicians, who presented to the initiated an enchanting draught, before they made the ghosts appear. Are not these proceedings stamped with visible marks of imposition? for truth is only discoverable to a sober and undisturbed mind. It ought to be further observed, that magicians generally decline to perform, in the presence of men of learning, who are able to discover their tricks. They prefer the company of young and ignorant people, upon whom they may impose with more ease. Why do they not display their art before a literary society, in open day, and without any contrived apparatus? Are the demons too modest to make their appearance in such respectable company? Or can they, like owls and bats, not bear the light of day? Or are they too proud to appear without the ceremonial and etiquette of an Hebrew Caldean invitation? What would we

say to a physician or a naturalist, who, to prove a new discovery, would make his experiments only by candle light, or for ignorant people, after having frightened them out of their wits. Would we put any confidence in him? And yet we are persuaded to give credit to an enchanter, who, under the same circumstances, claims the assistance of supernatural beings, to perform incredible things.

Thirdly, men seem to be naturally fond of hearing and telling strange stories. The child is all attention, when it listens to the tales related by its nurse. Youth forgets sleep and hunger, when reading the Arabian Night tales, or the Mysteries of Udolpho; and travellers know how to impose upon the credulity of their readers, or of a gaping audience. Curiosity alone is not the source of this propensity. It is fostered and stiffened by misguided ambition. Let the most marvellous and incredible story be told, with a serious air to an ignorant rustic, he will swallow it like honey, and hasten to repeat it to his fellows. Try to convince him of his credulity and of the falsehood of his account, and you will make him angry, because you deprive him of the pleasure and privilege to appear big in company by telling such a monstrous story; remonstrate against him, and you offend his clownish pride. He will turn his back upon you, for letting him know that you think yourself wiser than other people.

But it is time to review the chief Magicians and Sorcerers; to examine their character and authority, and to canvass their claims to supernatural operations. To take every one of them under considera-

tion, would be as tedious as needless. We will, therefore, only take notice of those who have been most famous and renowned. And first of all, our attention is directed to the magicians of Egypt, who opposed Moses, the divine legislator of the Jews. These sorcerers are said, in the second book of Moses, in the seventh and following chapter, to have changed their rods into serpents, the water of the Nile into blood, and to have produced abundance of frogs. But who sees not the mark of IMPOSTOR branded on the forehead of these magicians? Pharaoh undoubtedly believed in witchcraft; why else should he have maintained a number of sorcerers at his court? It was therefore easy to impose upon this superstitious king. For witchcraft can never take root unless it be supported by credulity. The Egyptian magicians belonged to the first order of that nation. They were priests in the exclusive possession of the then known arts and sciences, who designedly kept the people in the grossest darkness and ignorance. For such men it was no difficult task to make all others believe what they pleased. Pharaoh, although a king, and a powerful and arbitrary king too, was no member of that order. And as a specimen of his want of knowledge, it seems purposely to be recorded, chap. 1, 8, that he was unacquainted with the annals of his kingdom. Before this prince the magicians were to perform. As men of the first rank, it must be supposed that they had free access to the royal palace, and were acquainted with the situation of all its apartments. And being not in want of means, it was not difficult for them, to pro-

cure, even in the royal house, accomplices to assist them in their cheat. Thus circumstanced, they found no difficulty to make it appear by sleight of hand, as if their rods were changed into serpents, to give to the muddy water of the Nile a reddish color, and slily to introduce some hidden frogs, into the royal apartment. But when they were bidden to act on a broader scale, and to enter, after the example of Moses, the open tracts of nature, they humbly confessed that their power had forsaken them.

The famous witch of En-dor, whose authority is of so great consequence to the friends of witchcraft, deserves next to be introduced. It is recorded in the 28th chap. of the book that goes under the name of Samuel, that this woman had a familiar spirit, and that she raised up the ghost of Samuel at the request of Saul. Although the historian gives the story as it was reported, without any remarks of his own, still from the series of his narrative, it is plain that at that time, belief in witchcraft generally prevailed among the Israelites, and that great numbers attempted to take advantage from this common infatuation of their fellow-citizens. The practice of magic had so much increased among the Jews, during the tumults of their republic, and had become so embarrassing to the state, that Saul at the beginning of his reign, had been compelled to cut off the wizards and those that had familiar spirits. However, this royal act we must not ascribe to a conviction in his own mind of the futility of this practice, he being rather induced to it by the advice of Samuel, who reminded him of its unlawfulness. Saul adhered certainly to the last

to the popular belief of his nation, of which his visit to En-dor is an unquestionable proof. Considering this, and the distressing situation wherein he was placed, as well as the gloomy disposition of his mind, we are obliged to allow, that the mind of this unhappy prince was wide open for deceit. His friend and counsellor, Samuel, had left him; he was even forsaken by God; his subjects flocked in great numbers to the standard of David; his powerful enemies pressed him in every quarter, and threatened his desponding forces with a total defeat. Thus situated arrives the king with a trembling heart and under the cover of night at En-dor, in the house of the sorceress, who had given already a proof of her cunning, by escaping the vigilance of the royal officers, that were commissioned to put his law against witches into execution. Although the account of her proceedings in bringing up the ghost of the prophet, is but short and defective, still the traces of imposition are every where visible. After having performed the mysterious ceremonies which usually precede conjurations of that kind, she causes a cloud of narcotic vapors to rise from the earth, at the sight of which she cries with a loud voice, to increase the fear of the spectators. The terrified king asks her, whom seest thou? for it ought to be well observed, that the bystanders saw nothing but smoke, and were obliged to give credit to the answer, which the hag thought proper to give to this question. Her answer was first pretty ambiguous, as is generally the case with oracular responses. And even when desired by Saul to give a more explicit description of the ghost she pretend-

ed to see, she resorted to her usual trick, giving him a form that could be applied to every aged prophet, which however was sufficient to satisfy the credulity of Saul. These few remarks must convince every unprepossessed reader, that the famous witch of Endor was nothing else but an infamous impostor, who had acquired great proficiency in her art; and that she well knew how to turn this trade to her interest: of this the fine repast which she served up before her royal guest and his servants, is a sufficient proof.

But, it may be said, how came this woman to know that one of her visitors was the king? and how could she give even that superficial description of the prophet? Is it then so strange that subjects of a very small kingdom, should have personal knowledge of their sovereign, who was besides notorious by his exceeding high stature? Should the cunning witch not have perceived from the deep respect, which was undoubtedly shewn to Saul by his attendants, that she had to deal with some high personage, although he was disguised? Her serious remonstrance to the first address of the strangers, leaves no doubt, but that at first sight she harbored some suspicion of that kind. And herein she was confirmed by the eagerness of Saul to see Samuel, and by his subsequent conversation. Her personal knowledge of the prophet is still less subject to doubt. Samuel had been from his youth to his old age at the head of the Jewish republic, and administered justice among them, going from year to year in circuit to Bethel and Gilgal and Mispeh. It was therefore almost impossible that any Israelite could remain ignorant of

his person and character. But it may be further asked; from whence did the voice proceed that answered the questions of Saul, and the correctness in these answers in predicting the fate of the unhappy monarch? As persons who set up for magicians are seldom without assistance, the answer might have been given by some hidden accomplice. But I am rather inclined to believe that the woman was a ventriloquist, who could speak in a manner unobserved by the spectators. The correctness in her answer is not at all surprising, as the issue of the battle between Saul and his enemies could easily be foreseen. Saul had pitched his camp not far from En-dor and in the face of his enemies. And could an old woman be ignorant of what passes in her neighborhood, in particular respecting matters of so public a nature as war and the strength of the conflicting armies? But with all her foresight and craft, she could not avoid committing a great blunder. To-morrow, she said in the name of the ghost, thou and thy sons shall be with us, namely in the regions of the dead, which however, as the event shows, happened not until some days after.

Simon Magus is the first sorcerer mentioned in the annals of the gospel: It is said of him, Acts 8, 9, that he gave himself out to be some great one. But he that gives himself out, or pretends to be something great, is an impostor. Which character agrees very well with the description that Luke gives of him in the sequel of the history. The legends concerning this man, recorded by the fathers, are entitled to no credit, being founded merely on tradition.

Apollonius of Thyana, who lived in the first century of the christian era, is more celebrated for his marvellous deeds. Philostratus, who flourished in the reign of emperor Severus, and thus about a hundred years after Apollonius, has written the history of his life; but as this work is evidently composed with a view to oppose the gospel history of our Saviour, it may easily be conceived how little credit is due to that author. The accounts he gives of the miraculous achievements of his hero, are almost too ridiculous to be believed by the vulgar. He relates, for instance, that Apollonius arriving at Ephesus, at a time when the plague was raging in that city, and finding an old beggar sitting near the temple of Hercules, commanded that he immediately should be stoned, as an enemy of the gods, in which he was obeyed by the mob. And when at his command the heap of stones was afterwards removed, a dog was found instead of the old man. He says also, that when Apollonius was called to account by the emperor Domitian, he had disappeared at once from the court room: but this he may have effected in a natural way. It is known that Ælian, the commander of the emperor's body guard, was a friend and old acquaintance of Apollonius, who could easily remove him from among the crowd, and make the superstitious emperor believe that he had vanished. It is further told of him, that, in the midst of a speech delivered by him at Ephesus, he should have cried out; at this moment the tyrant Domitian is murdered, which was afterwards proved to be true; but it is also known that he instigated Nerva and others to

rebel against Domitian, and although he could see from Ephesus to Rome, he could not divine that the plot would be discovered. In the subsequent ages no famous magician appeared, the practice of that art being wholly engrossed by old women. However, Albertus Magnus, the illustrious bishop of Ratisbon, who lived in the thirteenth century, was again accounted a great adept in magic. Many ridiculous stories are told of him, which originated in his great knowledge of nature and mechanics, which the ignorance of that age ascribed to supernatural influence. Bombast de Hogenheim Paracelsus would fain have persuaded his cotemporaries, that he was a great conjuror, but it would not succeed according to his wishes. He had too little knowledge of mathematics, to give to his conjurations the appearance of truth; and his explanations of the natural phenonena are ridiculous in the highest degree. In his work De Meteoris, he asserts that the mock suns are of brass, produced by spirits, whom he calls penates; that the shooting stars are real excrements of the celestial bodies, and that the colour of the rainbow is composed of salt of fire; and other eccentric notions. Doctor Faust was more successful, being better versed in mathematical magic; but his conjurations raised so much disturbance in Erfurt, that he was advised by the regents of the university, to withdraw. The biography that goes under his name, is a mere romance. As late as the year 1750, a certain discharged hussar by the name of Schroepfer, deceived many people and even men of learning, in the city of Leipsic, although his conjurations were not without

visible marks of deception. Like his predecessors, he frightened the spectators by an horrible apparatus and mysterious ceremonies. He conjured first the genii, who, although they did not openly appear, performed a concert on wine-glasses. The ghosts of the dead made not their appearance in their natural form, but under the shape of a vapor, and imitated their voice. But the wise laughed at his operations, and the impostor, burdened with debts, shot himself. In the year 1753, a child which was said to be possessed of seven devils, was shown at Acken on the Elbe ; but when the affair was properly examined into and when two practitioners were ordered by high authority to watch the child, the spirits thought proper to make their escape without any further progress. In the year 1759, a certain woman of Kemberg, in Saxony, named A. F. Lohman, pretended to be possessed of demons, and imposed upon the first minister of that place, who published a serious account of the demoniac. He was however refuted by the celebrated Dr. Semler, of Halle, in his Dispatch of Modern Spirits and Old Errors, in the affair of A. F. Lohman ; whereupon the possession took a very ridiculous end. These few instances are sufficient to convince us, that all magical operations, all stories of witchcraft and visions, originate either in delusion, or that they proceed from designing imposition.

But what can we oppose to the confessions of witches in courts of justice ? Have they not avowed their commerce with the devil ? Have they not acknowledged that they could produce storms and dis-

tempers by the assistance of evil spirits? And have they not been sentenced, on this account, to suffer a painful death? However incredible it may first appear, that all these declarations of witches should be false and unfounded, still we are convinced by experience and a proper examination of the character and conduct of the judges, that no essential proof in favor of witchcraft, can be derived from these confessions. Those unhappy victims of ignorance may be brought under four classes. Some were entirely innocent. Summoned before the bar by malice or avarice, they were forced by the most exquisite tortures to avow the absurd inquiries of the judges. Others of these wretches believed themselves to be witches. Being either ideots or childish, and having repeatedly heard stories of witchcraft and of intercourse with demons, their fancy was deranged, so that they at last really believed they saw the devil. By the use of narcotic salves they were thrown into a deep sleep, and dreamt that they were flying through the air on a broomstick, and danced with Satan in the assembly of witches. Considering the power of imagination and the effects of melancholy, we have great reason to suspect the confessions of those unhappy women; for it is not seldom that persons endowed with a lively imagination, when they repeatedly represent to themselves the same thing, at last really believe that they perceive it. This is often the case with children; when they are continually entertained with stories of apparitions, their fancy will take fire, and they at last will believe they see ghosts. This is the reason why nobody sees apparitions, that does not

believe in them. When children are permitted to hear and to read tales concerning witches, they will at last believe that they see the devil, and that they have intercourse with evil spirits. Many deluded children of that kind, from seven to fourteen years, were executed in Wurtzburg, in the seventeenth century, after having voluntarily confessed intercourse with Satan. It is related in the biography of Antoinette Bourignon, that, when several nuns belonging to a monastery in the Netherlands, and suspected of witchcraft, were examined by the inquisitors, almost all the young pensioners of said cloister, accused themselves of the same crime. We cannot read without pity the ridiculous confessions of these girls. Every one of them had a little devil, who slept and played with them and carried them through the air in the assembly of witches. But it is to be lamented that men of learning, who presided as judges, could give credit to those absurd declarations, and condemn the poor children to corporeal punishment and even to death. Further, children and all childish persons are inclined to imitate others, which propensity, when misguided by a deranged fancy, leads them to commit the greatest extravagancies. A remarkable instance of that kind, happened in Silesia, in the beginning of the last century. The children of a fortified town, seeing the Swedish forces performing their daily devotions in the open field, were suddenly attacked with a religious enthusiasm. They assembled in crowds in the field to keep prayer meetings, disregarding all threatenings and chastisements that were inflicted to cure them of their

religious frenzy. Even a company of soldiers, who were commanded to frighten them into obedience, could not disperse them, although they fired at them with powder. But at last the infatuation ceased of itself. It is therefore no wonder that children, in particular, that are educated in monasteries, where their imagination is heated with all kind of absurdities, when they hear an old nun day by day regale them with stories of witchcraft, or when she even endeavors to persuade them that she has intercourse with demons, and to that end performs mysterious ceremonies in their presence, should at last fall into a magical enthusiasm and really believe that they are witches, and have intercourse with evil spirits, adhering to it to the last. Old women resemble children in this respect. Their minds are weak and their imagination lively. Can the confession of such persons be entitled to any credit? Besides, experience teaches us that melancholy persons often fancy themselves to have committed the greatest crimes, denouncing themselves as great criminals. I myself have known an instance of that description. A respectable planter in the West Indies, who was a member of the protestant church, and a man of unimpeachable character and undisguised piety, having been deprived of his eye-sight by a film, fell into a deep melancholy, which was unquestionably occasioned by the same cause that had produced the film. He accused himself of the blackest crimes, and entreated his relations to deliver him up to punishment. At the request of his friends, I visited him and conscientiously endeavored to convince him of his delu-

sion; but although I possessed his confidence, all my attempts to that purpose were in vain. He persisted in his declarations until he recovered from his sickness, into which he however soon relapsed, and expired. How many of the forementioned unhappy old women may have been in the same circumstances, and ought therefore to have been sent to the hospital or bedlam, to cure them of their madness, instead of having been condemned to the pile. Thirdly, many had been accounted witches, who labored under epileptic or convulsive fits. The symptoms of the catalepsis, may still easier be mistaken for supernatural effects, as persons afflicted with that strange sickness lose all sensibility and become callous to every bodily injury. At the close of the paroxysm, they make all kind of strange motions, as laughing, dancing, &c. Having recovered themselves, they commonly relate that they have been in heaven or in hell or in some distant place, and that they have conversed with absent or dead persons, &c. The visions of the paroxysm generally correspond with the usual impressions of their imagination. When, therefore, an old woman, whose head is full of witchcraft, sorcery and bugbears, is so unhappy as to be attacked by this sickness, then she will believe that she has been in the assembly of witches, or changed into a wolf, and that she has injured men and beasts. This impression will be so powerful on her mind, that she will declare herself to be a witch in spite of death. Many other nervous diseases are apt to raise suspicion of witchcraft, in particular when they are attended with irregular and violent motions of the body. In the

same manner, many night-walkers, who performed extraordinary things while asleep, have been considered as influenced by evil spirits, and condemned as night-hags. But there is a kind of pretended sorcerers who ought to be exterminated whenever they can be traced. I mean those poisoners who learn the art of preparing venomous remedies with the sole view to satisfy their wicked propensities. From the above quoted work of Pliny, it plainly appears that the greater part of pretended sorcerers in Rome, were more guilty of this infernal practice than of witchcraft. There are some narcotic poisons which, when administered in small doses, do not effectually deprive man of life, but produce convulsions, contractions of the limbs, and other extraordinary nervous distempers. If wicked people are acquainted with these medicines, they may abuse them so as to produce effects which ignorance ascribes to witchcraft. And even the persons who apply these medicines, may attribute their powerful operations to infernal influence, which to procure, they, in their opinion, are obliged to resort to mysterious ceremonies. But Satan is certainly not concerned in this mischief, those fatal symptoms being produced only by the power of the medicines and their destructive preparation, and applied by the contriver of all evil—the human heart. It is common with friends of witchcraft, of visions and of apparitions, to appeal to the highest authority, to the the sacred volume. It is recorded in sacred history, they say, that sorcerers have existed in Egypt, that the witch of En-dor has raised up the ghost of Samuel, and many instan-

ces of visions, apparitions and demoniacal influence, are mentioned by the inspired writers. Thus fortified, they think themselves safe against every attack of antagonists. But I would advise these well-meaning Christians, in this and similar cases, to apply the authority of the Bible with more precaution and moderation. This sacred book is no encyclopædia, or source from whence the knowledge of all the arts and sciences must be drawn. Its authors wrote in a simple and uncultivated style, accommodated to the unpolished genius of remote antiquity; so that from the forementioned accounts we can infer nothing more than that those notions prevailed in their time. In this regard, therefore, we ought to follow the advice of the fathers of the primitive church, who laid it down as a maxim: that in dubious scriptural passages, we must first enquire, what reason dictates and what daily experience teaches, and explain such passages accordingly; and since the art of magic or supernatural operations, performed by the agency of spirits, cannot be proved by reason or ascertained by experience, it follows that the scriptures cannot be applied to this case. Moses relates the magical performances before Pharaoh, in the popular language of his age. From this circumstance we have no more right to conclude that even Moses himself believed in witchcraft, than to say that every person who makes use of the expression, "the sun rises," is opposed to the Copernican system. The laws against witchcraft, published by him, are merely intended to guard the Jews against superstitious practices, whereby they could be seduced into idolatry. The posses-

sed or demoniacs, of whom mention is made in the gospel, are often classed among the sick, whom Jesus healed. And Doctor Richard Mead, in his excellent work, Demorbis Biblicis, or on the diseases mentioned in the bible, has evidently shown that all diseases of those times, the nature of which was unknown, and that had extraordinary effects on the human frame, e. g. lunacy, epilepsis and convulsive fits, were ascribed to the influence of demons, not only among the Jews, but also among the Greeks. Hence he was supported by the learned Hugh Farmer, disciple of the pious Dr. Doddridge in his dissertations on the worship of human spirits among the heathen nations; on Christ's temptation, and on the demoniacs.

What has been advanced is sufficient, I believe, to convince every unprejudiced reader, that belief in witchcraft, or in the influence of demons on the natural world, and all notions connected with it, are without the least foundation, having ignorance for their parent, and deception for their foster-mother. If it were an innocent error, like the visions of Swedenborg, then we would pity the poor mortal, who suffers himself to be deluded so far from the path of reason. But as every corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit, so this noxious plant is productive of the greatest evils, by corroding even the vitals of human happiness. It either relaxes the cheering confidence in Divine Providence, or gives to fanciful hope an unwarranted stimulus. It sheds the seeds of suspicion at large, pregnant with envy, discord, hatred, malice and revenge. It deprives man of his natural energy, sinks him into the lap of indolence

and sloth, and entangles the way to mental improvement. Most of these baneful effects may be applied even to theosophy. We know of no instance that an enthusiast should have enriched the republic of letters with a single new discovery. It seems rather to be their aim to perplex the human mind by fantastical notions, and a barbarous and unintelligible dialect. And although they boast the exclusive possession of the art, to render man deaf against the voice of passion, and to raise him to godlike perfection; still their interior light seems to lead them to ignorance and indolence. Arts and sciences have always been promoted by mental exertion, while theosophical illumination has impeded their progress.

I will only add, that belief in witchcraft, in visions and apparitions, and the interference of spirits in human affairs, is diametrically opposed to the most essential doctrines of the gospel. It is

1. A fundamental doctrine of the christian religion, that there is but ONE GOD—John 17, 3. If we therefore, ascribe to Satan or his host such operations, as presuppose qualities, that belong to the true God only, e. g. omniscience, omnipresence and creating power, then we place another divine being by the side of the true God, and fall into the error which is justly condemned in the Manicheans of old.

2. It is a fundamental article of the christian faith, that man is a particular object of divine care, and that without the will of his Father in Heaven, no hair can fall from his head—Luke 21, 18. If we therefore admit that evil spirits, or men by their assistance, can injure us, we deny that comforting doctrine, sup-

posing that God is not sufficiently powerful or not willing to protect us.

3. It is declared in the gospel, that death decides the fate of man ; that the blessed cannot be disturbed in the enjoyment of rest and felicity—Rev. 14, 13. Nor the wicked abandon the place of his doom —Luke 16, 26, 31. If we, therefore, believe in apparitions of ghosts of good or bad men, we overthrow this gospel.

4. We are assured that it was one of the chief ends of the mission of Christ, to destroy the power of Satan—Heb. 2, 14. If, we, therefore, allow that the devil has any more power in the world, we rob the King of Truth of the brightest jewel in his crown, and discredit the words, which he spoke with his dying mouth : It is finished.

# ANNOTATIONS.

PAGE 1.

*Art.*—Magic is called an art, because it requires preparation and skill, whereas the power of performing true miracles, is neither methodically acquired, nor dependent on contrivance, but proceeds immediately from God.

PAGE 1.

*Magicians*—Ought to be distinguished from magic, which was the title given by the ancient inhabitants of the east, to their wise men and philosophers. The word magus is of Persian origin. Hoge signifies in the Hebrew language, of which the Persian is a dialect, to observe; hence Mage, an observer; however in later times, the word magus was also applied to conjurers and enchanters, and to all who pretended to an intercourse with spirits, and to supernatural operations.

PAGE 1.

*Burnt to ashes.*—This and a great number of curious performances, as the palengenesis or restoration of plants, are described in a work published at Berlin, in eight volumes, by the famous chymist, Joh. Ch. Wiegleb.

PAGE 3.

*God himself.*—It is asserted on good authority, that men are inclined to make gods to themselves after their own heart. The form and character which they ascribe to their god, generally corresponds with

their own ideas of perfection, and the darling passions of their heart. Thus Odin, the god of the ancient inhabitants of Northern Europe, and Fitzleputzle of the ancient Mexicans, were cruel monsters. The gods of the Greeks were generally liars, deceivers and intriguers. And still we may, with some degree of certainty, form an opinion of any man's character, from his peculiar conceptions of the deity.

PAGE 3.

*Future state.*—As it is with the human conceptions of the deity, so it is with their opinion concerning the future state. What is here their greatest delight, that they wish to enjoy in the future world. The carnal Jews differed but very little from Mahomet in the description of the paradise. The Talmud says, that the Jews will sit at golden tables, covered with golden dishes, containing meat of the Leviathan, a fish more than three miles long, and of the bird Juchna, the eggs of which cover three acres of land, and of fat roasted geese, and corned beef; they will drink the most delicious sack, from golden cups holding 221 measures each; their wives will bring forth children every day; the trees will be continually laden with fruit, and the stores will be filled with ready made silk clothing. These sensual notions, after having undergone some refinement, were introduced into the christian church by Montanus the founder of the millenium, and are still among the leading features of enthusiasm.

PAGE 3.

*Inanimate things.*—We perceive that insane, stupid and intoxicated persons, are continually mutter-

ing to themselves. They address every object that is in their way, and fight the post of a fence, with the same bravery as Don Quixote the windmills.

PAGE 3.

*Evil spirits worshipped.*—The sailors of China offer sacrifices to Satan, under the name of Joost, giving him of the best sort of tea, (gun-powder) which on that account is called in the Dutch language, Joostjes tea.

PAGE 4.

*Lunatics*—Are generally considered in the east as favorites of Divine Providence. The reverence which the Mahometans show to santos, or lunatics, falls little short of divine adoration. From Acts 16, 16, it appears that the same opinion prevailed among the Greeks.

PAGE 5.

*Revealed by God.*—Were magic of divine origin, and handed down by our first parents to their posterity, then all nations would follow the same method in procuring supernatural aid. But history teaches that different nations have not only employed different means, but that even the same nations, have tried to obtain by new means, what the old ones could not effect. It is true, the Jews boast that they once have been in possession of an infallible magical remedy, which they call Schemhamphoros, signifying, a definite or explicit divine name, excelling that of Jehovah, and implying not only, the eternal immutability of God, but also his almighty power, omniscience, truth, justice, benevolence and mercy. The Talmudists say, that David found this name in the bung-

hole of the earth, when he was digging for the foundation of the temple, and that by its power the pious are able to create a world. But although they assert that Moses and even our Saviour should have performed the miracles, by the power of this Schemhamphoros, they can give no further account of it, than that it was kept, to prevent abuse in the Holy of Holies of the temple, and that it afterwards was destroyed when Jerusalem was taken by Titus Vespasian. A Jew may believe this.

PAGE 5.

*Talismans*—Are properly the learned among the Mahometans; then it signifies certain figures or characters engraven in stone, or written on paper, which the superstitious hang to their body, to preserve them against evil accidents or to foresee future events. What power has been ascribed and is still attributed by superstitious christians, to the sign of the cross, is sufficiently known from church history and from the ritual of the Roman Catholic Church.

PAGE 6.

*Enchanting power.*—It is abominable that even christians will not abandon the sacrilegious practice, to make use of the name of God and of scripture passages to superstitious purposes. They should remember the tremendous words, "I will not hold him guiltless, that takes my name in vain."

PAGE 7.

*Amulets*—Are certain things which superstitious people hang about the neck, as certain herbs or papers with scripture passages, to prevent or to cure a disease.

PAGE 7.

*On particular days.*—This absurd notion is more destructive to the husbandman, than the locusts of Egypt. It is time, he says, to sow, to plant, but the day is not lucky and the signs unfavorable ; the business, however pressing, must be postponed, until the aspect will be more promising ; but when the propitious time arrives, the weather is against him, or the work has so much crowded on his hands, that he can do it only by halves, or that he must omit what is most necessary. If the experiment could be made, and I believe that I have read somewhere, that it has been actually made in Europe, that seven or eight farmers, were each allowed a spot of ground of the same value, and that they were instructed to manure, to sow and to plant on different days and at different changes of the moon, and if this experiment were repeated for seven or eight succeeding years, it would be found at the end, that the most industrious had been the most successful.

PAGE 8.

*Certain numbers.*—The number three, like the number seven, has always been in favor with ignorant people. When a horse has received a wound, three little sticks of a certain growth, and mysteriously cut must be applied to it in a certain direction, and the bark of them preserved in a very dry place. That a little stick put into a wound, will contribute to its cure, by giving vent to the purulent matter, is founded in reason : but why will not one stick do as well ? The reason is obvious : three is the sacred number. Why the mysterious application ? Because a simple

remedy would lose all its charm, and deprive the doctor of his importance.

PAGE 8.

*Noble and sublime thoughts.*—Even wicked thoughts and criminal notions that require some cunning and contrivance, are ascribed to supernatural influence, by people in the lowest stage of civilization. When the negroes in the West Indies have succeeded in pilfering a stranger, they commonly introduce the account they give of it to their friends with the words: *God has blessed me.* This opinion seems still to prevail among the lower class of more civilized nations. Let a loquacious woman tell the story of her quarrels, and in what manner she has defended herself, she will commonly conclude her harangue with the observation: I spoke, I did not know how; it seemed as if the words were given into my mouth. Although this expression may be in some measure correct, still the idea commonly attached to it is erroneous.

PAGE 9.

*Sympathy.*—It is strange that this word is often used by people who do not understand its meaning. But the more mysterious the word the safer the lure. Sympathetic doctors have assured me that the pain which they feel in the hand applied to the disordered limb, is greater than that of the patient himself. If the sufferer be provided with an equal share of imagination, it may give him some relief. But it is commonly the case that the evil, unless remedied by the healing hand of nature, returns with redoubled force and afterwards baffles all the efforts of the phy-

sician, whose timely aid would perhaps have effected a radical cure.

PAGE 10.

*Popular magic.*—Even magic of the coarsest kind was in vogue among the Greeks. Pericles, when sick, wore an amulet hung to his body by a woman. And Plato de Legg XII makes mention of the tying of a knot as a magic means. Hecate was commonly invoked during magical operations.

PAGE 10.

*Popular creed.*—Herein he followed the principles of his master. To conform with the national religion and ouden eidenai, or to know nothing, were two chief maxims of Socrates, to which we must ascribe the order he gave to his disciples, immediately before his death, to offer a cock to Esculapius.

PAGE 10.

*Number of citizens.*—As Plato believed a certain number of citizens propitious to a state, so some people believe a certain number placed at a table to be fatal. Many superstitious people have been scared almost to death by counting thirteen persons at the same banquet. But since the stomach was concerned in this notion, the arguments of which are often more powerful than those of reason, it has happily become unfashionable.

PAGE 11.

*Epicurus.*—Superstition and unbelief are closely allied. Often they go hand in hand, or take occasionally one another's place. Small is the number of the wise, who are able to steer clear from these fatal extremities. When the leaders of the French

revolution attempted to free their fellow-citizens from the shackles of superstition, they plunged headlong into infidelity. However, this madness, like all other extremes, came soon to an end. Incredulity can never become general, or be of long continuation, because it is incongruous with the nature of man, who is naturally a religious being. And on this account superstition is more dangerous than infidelity, as being more congenial to the human mind, and thus easier supported and propagated by external power.

PAGE 11.

*Caballa*—Signifies properly, reception, a term commonly used among the Jews to denote any kind of instruction. When a Jew advances a position which is not authorised in his sacred writings, he says, I have it from the caballa, or by tradition, which is of higher authority with them than even the written law.

PAGE 12.

*Inactivity.*—With this idea their notion of the Deity completely agrees, representing Him as enjoying the most perfect and unconcerned ease.

PAGE 12.

*Fancy*—employed.—Mountaineers on the contrary are inclined to visions of a more terrific kind. The wild romantic prospects wherewith they are surrounded, the hovering clouds continually changing in form, the fogs which incessantly envelope them, the toilsome and dangerous manner of living to which they are exposed, bewilder their imagination and fill the mind with gloomy ideas. The second sights of the Highlanders in Scotland, are an evincing proof of this remark.

PAGE 13.

*Fatal notions.*—The history of the Jewish and the Christian church gives many dismal accounts of the enormities committed by enthusiasm, when wrought up into fanaticism. The ferocious atrocity that attended the siege of Jerusalem on the part of the Jews, the destructive war which the Anabaptists stirred up in Germany, are facts too notorious to be mentioned. Most of the modern leaders of enthusiasm resembled in some respect the Bramins in their manner of living; for although they indulged not in idleness, still their occupation required but little exercise of the body. Jacob Boehme was a shoemaker; George Fox was of the same profession. Many of the founders of anabaptism were tailors. All followed a sedentary life, by which the abdomen is pressed into an unnatural position, impeding the necessary operations of the intestines, which often occasions a spleen, the parent of fantastical notions.

PAGE 14.

*Own example.*—The emperors Aurelius, Maxentius, and in particular Nero, were great patrons of magic. Pliny says, Nero would even command the gods, and to this end he sent for the most famous magicians and squandered vast sums of money upon them. He even suffered himself to be initiated into their order, and offered not only animal but even human sacrifices. But he was too crafty to be deceived by them, and therefore discharged them as impostors and would have nothing more to do with them.

PAGE 15.

*Fathers of the primitive church.*—Many of these well-meaning men were credulous in the highest de-

gree. Every page in the works of Tertullian and of Epiphanius bears witness to this truth. And even Ireneus and Eusebius were not free from that fault.

PAGE 15.

*Pointed out the thief.*—This he might easily do by observing the countenance of the poor fellow, which bore undoubtedly the mark of conscious guilt, in the presence of so great a magician.

PAGE 17.

*Jewish tradition.*—According to the Talmud, the demons were originally good spirits or angels, created on the sixth day; but two of them, namely, Schamhusai and Usael having manifested a malevolent jealousy at the creation of man, were expelled from heaven. Having settled among men, they intermarried with their daughters, and begot a great number of mongrel demons. This opinion they formed on a misconstruction of Genesis 6, 2, mistaking the words, benei Elohim, or the sons of God, for angels. It is asserted on the same authority that the first wife of Adam, who was created at the same time with him from dust, and named Lilith, first turned witch and afterwards became a prolific mother of demons, wherefore God created another wife for Adam from one of his ribs. Lilith, it is said, is still in existence, with three other female devils, namely, Naema, Magalath, and Igareth, who continually colonise the earth with evil spirits. Not to mention other fables of the same stamp.

PAGE 18.

*Desert places.*—Paulus was the first hermit; living ninety years in the deserts of Egypt. The number of those that were animated by his example, increas-

ed so fast that they were soon obliged to associate into communities, submitting to certain rules and laws. The places of residence of these several communities were called monasteries, and the members, monks, signifying solitaries. Egypt has always been the hot bed of fantastical notions, and many exotic plants from that impure soil, have corrupted the genuine fruits of the christian spirit.

PAGE 19.

*A kind of fury.*—The Pythea or priestess who pronounced the oracles at Delphos, was so sensible of her disagreeable situation that she often refused to mount the sacred tripod in order to receive the prophetic steam, by which she was thrown into a convulsive frenzy.

PAGE 24.

*West of England.*—Dr. Beckker, in the quoted work, has shown to a demonstration, that the charge against that unhappy woman was founded in malice, while he at the same time exposes the credulity of the official witnesses.

PAGE 24.

*Rosicrusian order.*—Robert Fludd, a physician of London and a member of that society, has published many works on the wonders of alchymies and the mysticism of the Rosicrusians; but they are profoundly obscure.

PAGE 24.

*Jacob Boehme*—Was a shoemaker of Goerlitz, in Saxony, which has given birth to many visionaries. Honest Jacob applied for some years closely to his business, and to a devout attention to religious exer-

cises. At last he was rewarded, according to his own account, with some supernatural illuminations, which broke upon his mind and overpowered him with ecstacy. These spiritual enjoyments, when not longer able to keep to himself, he sent into the world under the title of Aurora, or the rising of the sun. Having been advised by the magistrates to mind his calling and to leave off writing in future, he obeyed their injunction for seven years, and from that time poured forth a great number of books, which, in the estimation of the enlightened, are more precious than gold. Mr. William Law has published a pompous edition of them in English, which found so ready a market that another edition was soon wanted.

PAGE 25.

*Still hovering over the human mind.*—In the register of a small city in Upper Germany, called Hechingen, is recorded a proclamation by order of the reigning prince, and dated Feb. 18th, 1725, promising five guilders to every one who shall take an elf, goblin, or any other spectre, and deliver it either dead or alive to the first huntsman of the prince. [See Anselm's Rabiosus travels through Upper Germany.]

PAGE 25.

*This side of the Atlantic.*—The enthusiastic works of Swedenborg are translated into English. In his life time he had few adherents; but after his death, which happened in 1772, his notions were better relished. His followers in England and in the United States, style themselves the new Jerusalem church.

PAGE 25.

*Cagliostro.*—Count Alexander, whose true name was Joseph Balsamo, came to England by the way of

France, after having visited all the parts of the Levant. Here he imposed upon the credulity of the great and opulent, by his pretensions to supernatural knowledge and alchymy. On his return to Italy he was seized and committed to the castle of St. Angelo, where he died in 1794.

PAGE 26.

*Charms.*—I happened to obtain a charm that was given for the bite of a mad dog. It was a piece of written paper. How great was my surprise when I saw it contained the important words: eram, eras, erat, eramus, eratis, erant. Words that may vex a lazy school boy and put the arm of his master in motion, but which were never intended to prevent madness. Government ought to stop such fatal practices, whereby the lives of many are put in jeopardy.

PAGE 29.

*Wax-figures.*—According to Theodor de Niem, the daughters of Tamerlane made such wax figures and directed them towards the countries which their father intended to conquer, and thereby promoted his victories. [See Bayle's Dict. art. Rugger.

PAGE 29.

*Into a wolf.*—That this opinion prevailed in the time of Augustus, we learn from Virgil, Eclogue VIII, 97, where Alphibœsus addresses Damon in the following manner:

His ego sæpe lupum fieri, et secondere sylvis.
Mœrin, sæpe animas imis exire sepulchris,
Atque satas alio vidi traducere messes.

or,

By the power of these herbs, I have often seen Mœris transform
himself into a wolf and hide in the woods.
Often have I seen the ghosts rise from the subterraneous tombs
And by their power the laden sheaves removed.

But the learned men in Rome, like Petronius and Pliny, laughed at this folly.

PAGE 32.

*To be fired at.*—The balls used for that purpose are made of quicksilver, covered with a thin coat of glass. Thus they exactly resemble in colour and weight the common leaden balls; but being put into the barrel of a gun and rammed, they naturally break into small pieces, which, at the discharge, are dissipated in the air. The juggler stands at the distance, as a mark, brandishing his sword, while at the moment the gun is fired he drops slily two equal pieces of a leaden ball, pretending that they are of the same ball that was shot at him, being cut to pieces by his sword.

PAGE 43.

*Mysteries of Udolpho.*—Novels, in particular of the marvellous kind, are the bane of youth. They engross the time that could be employed for nobler purposes; they inflame the passions; store the imagination with fantastical notions, and, what is worse than all, they corrupt the heart. Many young persons by indulging an unpardonable passion for novels, have not only rendered themselves unfit for the useful stages of life, but have paved the way for their destruction. The unhappy fate of the author of the forementioned tale, should be a warning to all lovers of romances.

PAGE 48.

*Ventriloquists.*—There are people who have acquired a skill to speak with the mouth closed, in such a manner as that the sound seems to issue from the belly or from a distant quarter. The words that are used in the quoted passage, as well in the original Hebrew, as in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, plainly show that the witch of En-dor belonged to that sort.

PAGE 48.

*To-morrow.*—To apologize for the veracity of the father of lies, it has been asserted by the friends of witchcraft, that, by *to-morrow*, is understood in the Hebrew dialect, every future period. Although this may be granted when some other word is added to it, e. g. yesterday and to-morrow, to-morrow and after to-morrow, still where the word is singly used, there it has a definite signification, denoting the day that succeeds the present.

PAGE 52.

*Assembly of witches.*—Many places in Europe are renowned as rendezvous of witches. In Suabia they assemble on the Heuberg, in Hungary, at Carpen, and in Lower Saxony, on the Blocksberg.

PAGE 54.

*Committed great crimes.*—Sufferers under hysterical complaints are subject to the same gloomy imaginations. They sink often so deep into melancholy as to border on despair. This gloom of the mind is sometimes mistaken for a religious struggle, requiring ministerial assistance only. But this devil cannot be driven out, unless by *fasting* and prayer. Fasting,

a prudent diet, and medical aid, must precede, or at least accompany religious instruction and rational devotion, whereas clerical assistance alone, in particular when administered without precaution, often tends to increase the evil.

PAGE 56.

*Poisoners.*—Whole plots of these incarnate devils, and among them members of noble families, were executed in France at the beginning of the last century.

THE END.

## ERRATA.

*In the Preface.* Page iv, line 3d from the top, for "kind," read *mind.*

*In the Treatise.* Page 16, line 4th from bottom, for "Iamblious," read *Iamblicus.*

Page 21, line 11th from bottom, for "Engena," read *Erigena.*

Page 22, line 7th from bottom, for "Nalleus," read *Malleus.*

Page 29, line 7th from top, for "on," read *in.*

Page 30, line 14th from bottom, for "Adsamelech," read *Adramelech.*

Page 35, line 15th from bottom, for "arrainged," read *arraigned.*

*In the second Annotation*—for "magic," read *magii.*

Page 66, line 9th from bottom, for "lure," read *cure.*